

# Peer Support 101

## For Challenging Times



**Video recording link:**  
<https://vimeo.com/411219490>



*With Barbara Frampton*  
April, 2020

# Why this Webinar in Peer Support

It is unprecedented times and people need support  
or perhaps

More people are coming to you for support/comfort  
or

You see people struggling and  
you feel a desire to support others

But

What can we do if we don't have any formal training?

*This “crash course” was developed for this purpose*

# Webinar Objectives

- Peer Support Basics
- Supporting One Another in Challenging Times
- Cornerstones of Peer Support
- Tools for Supporting Others
- Wellness Tools for Supporters
- Tips for Talking to People in Crisis
- Q & A



# A Note About Confidentiality

- If you Google “Confidentiality”:
  - The State of keeping or being kept secret or private
  - Having another’s trust or confidence; entrusted with secrets or private affairs.
- Peer Support is position of trust
  - Confidentiality
  - Accountability
  - Reliability

# Challenging Times

## **“CHALLENGING TIMES”**

- What things are you hearing or seeing that remind you we are living in an unprecedented times?

(Please enter your thoughts in the chat box.)

# Challenging Times – What it's Like

**"CHALLENGING TIMES"**

Quarantine  
Social Distancing  
Worldwide  
Moving  
BREAKING NEWS!  
Flatten the Curve  
Pandemic  
Young People at Home  
Concern for Education  
Coronavirus  
COVID 19  
Job Loss  
Isolation  
Government Briefings  
Economic Downturn  
Deaths



# A Word about Social Distancing

- In a world of “social distancing”, when Social Connection is one of the Determinants of Health.
- We need to turn that around to Physical Distancing and Social Connection.



# Connecting in Challenging Times

- Letters
- Cards
- Chalk
- Phone
- Text
- Facebook
- Instagram
- Zoom





# MHCC Continuum of Peer Support

PEER SUPPORT

FRIENDSHIP

CLINICAL CARE

## **INFORMAL PEER SUPPORT**

Naturally occurring, voluntary, reciprocal relationship(s) with peers one-to-one or possibly in a community

## **CLUBHOUSE/WALK IN CENTRE**

Mainly psychosocial and social recreational focus with peer support naturally occurring among participants

## **SELF-HELP, MUTUAL PEER SUPPORT**

Consumer operated/run organizations/activities/programs, voluntary, naturally occurring, reciprocal relationships with peers in community settings e.g., housing, social/recreational, arts/culture, traditional/spiritual healing, recovery education/work, anti-discrimination education/work, human rights/disability rights education work

## **FORMALIZED/INTENTIONAL PEER SUPPORT**

Consumer run peer support services within community settings (either group or one-to-one) focusing on issues such as education, employment, MH systems navigation, systemic/individual advocacy, housing, food security, internet, transportation, recovery education, anti-discrimination work, etc.

## **WORKPLACE PEER SUPPORT**

Workplace-based programs where employees with lived experience are selected and prepared to provide peer support to other employees within their workplace

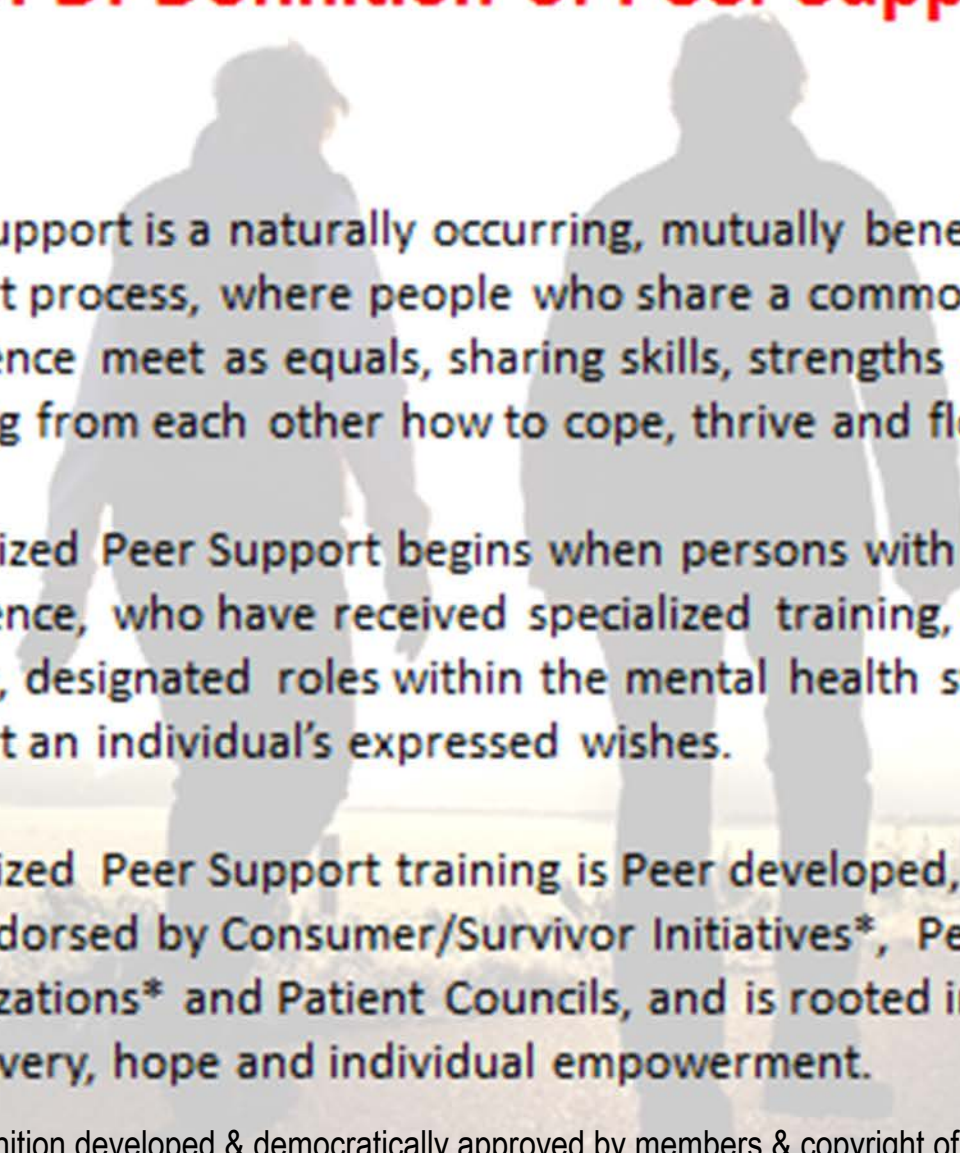
## **COMMUNITY CLINICAL SETTING PEER SUPPORT**

Peer support workers are selected to provide support to patients/clients that utilize clinical services, e.g., Outpatient, A.C.T teams, Case Management, Counselling

## **CLINICAL/CONVENTIONAL MH SYSTEM-BASED PEER SUPPORT**

Clinical setting, inpatient/outpatient, institutional peer support, multidisciplinary groups, recovery centres, or Rehabilitation Centres Crisis response, Crisis Management, Emergency Rooms, Acute Wards

# OPDI Definition of Peer Support



Peer Support is a naturally occurring, mutually beneficial support process, where people who share a common experience meet as equals, sharing skills, strengths and hope; learning from each other how to cope, thrive and flourish.

Formalized Peer Support begins when persons with lived experience, who have received specialized training, assume unique, designated roles within the mental health system to support an individual's expressed wishes.

Specialized Peer Support training is Peer developed, delivered and endorsed by Consumer/Survivor Initiatives\*, Peer Support Organizations\* and Patient Councils, and is rooted in principles of recovery, hope and individual empowerment.

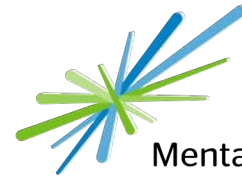
Definition developed & democratically approved by members & copyright of OPDI.  
You are welcome to quote the definition, without editing, and cite Ontario Peer Development Initiative as source.

# OPDI's Definition

“Peer Support is a naturally occurring,  
*mutually beneficial support process*,  
where people who share a common experience  
meet as equals,  
sharing skills, strengths and hope,  
learning from each other how to  
cope, thrive and flourish.”

# Core Values of Peer Support:

- Empathy and Mutuality
- Self-determination and Equity
- Recovery and Hope
- Non-judgmental
- Compassion
- Inclusivity
- Respect and dignity for all people
- Responsibility
- Social Inclusion
- Integrity, authenticity and trust
- Health and Wellness
- Lifelong learning and personal growth



Mental Health  
Commission  
of Canada

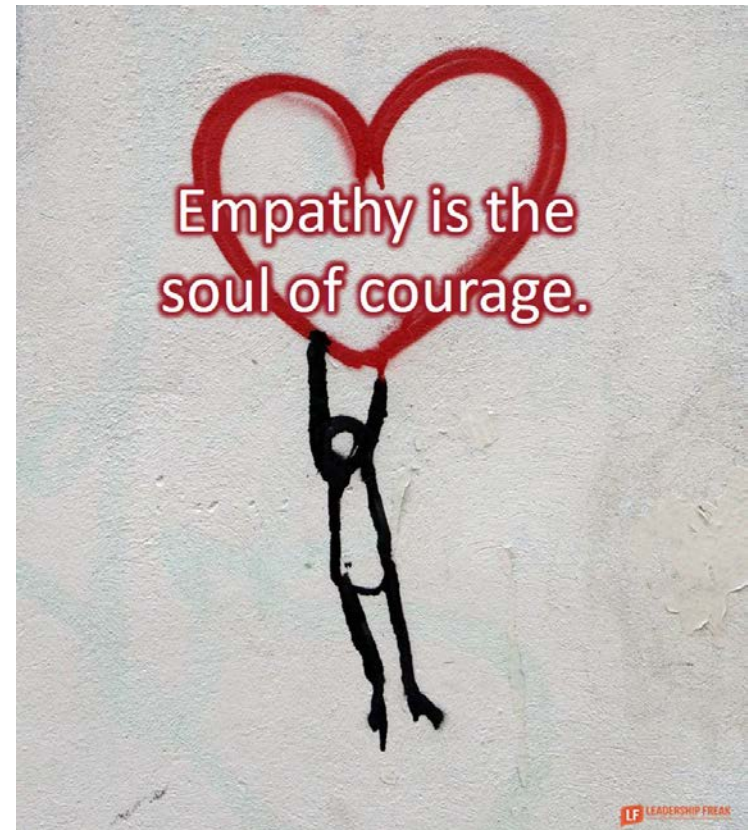
Commission de  
la santé mentale  
du Canada





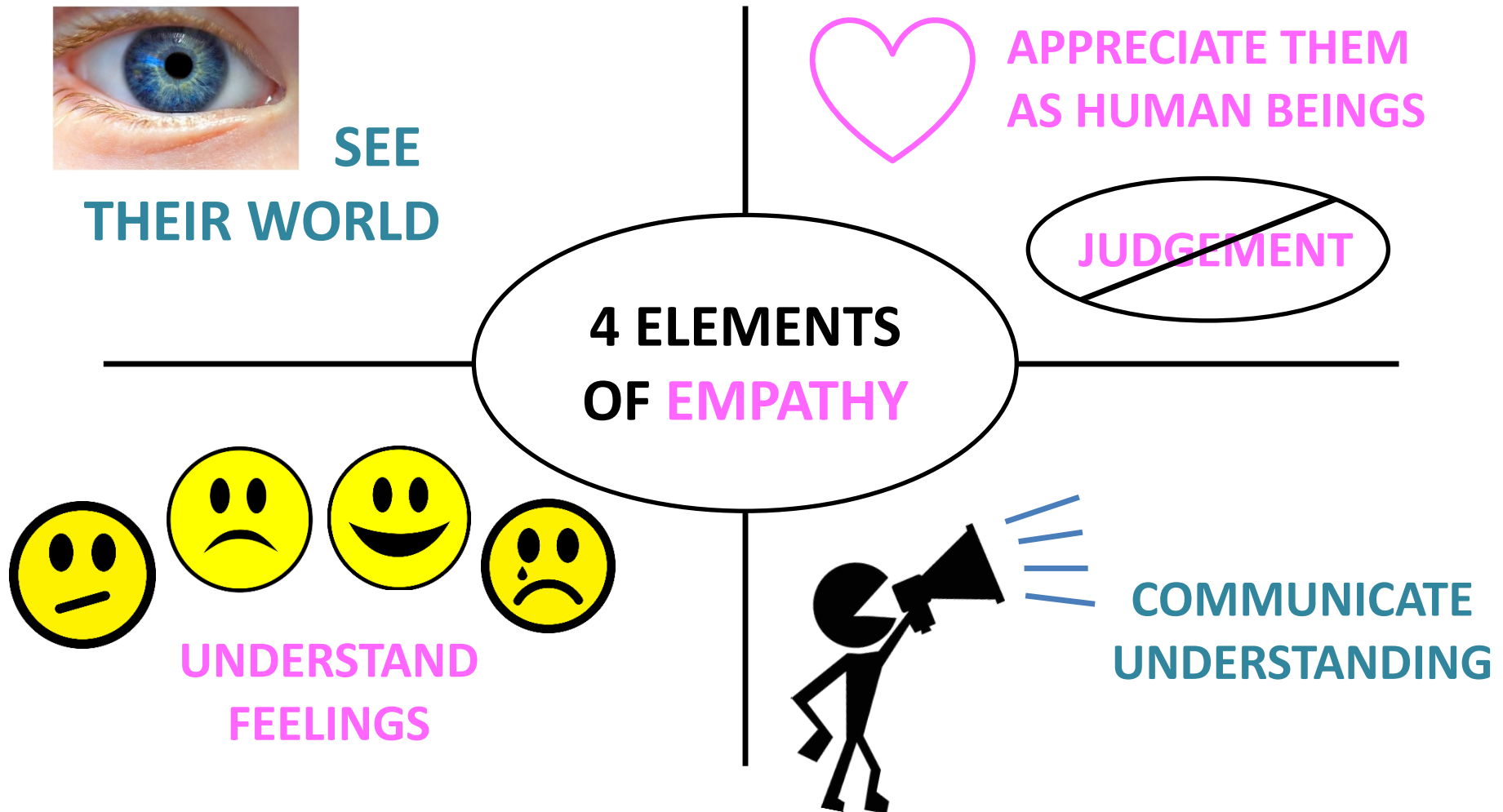
# Empathy

Feeling someone's pain in your heart





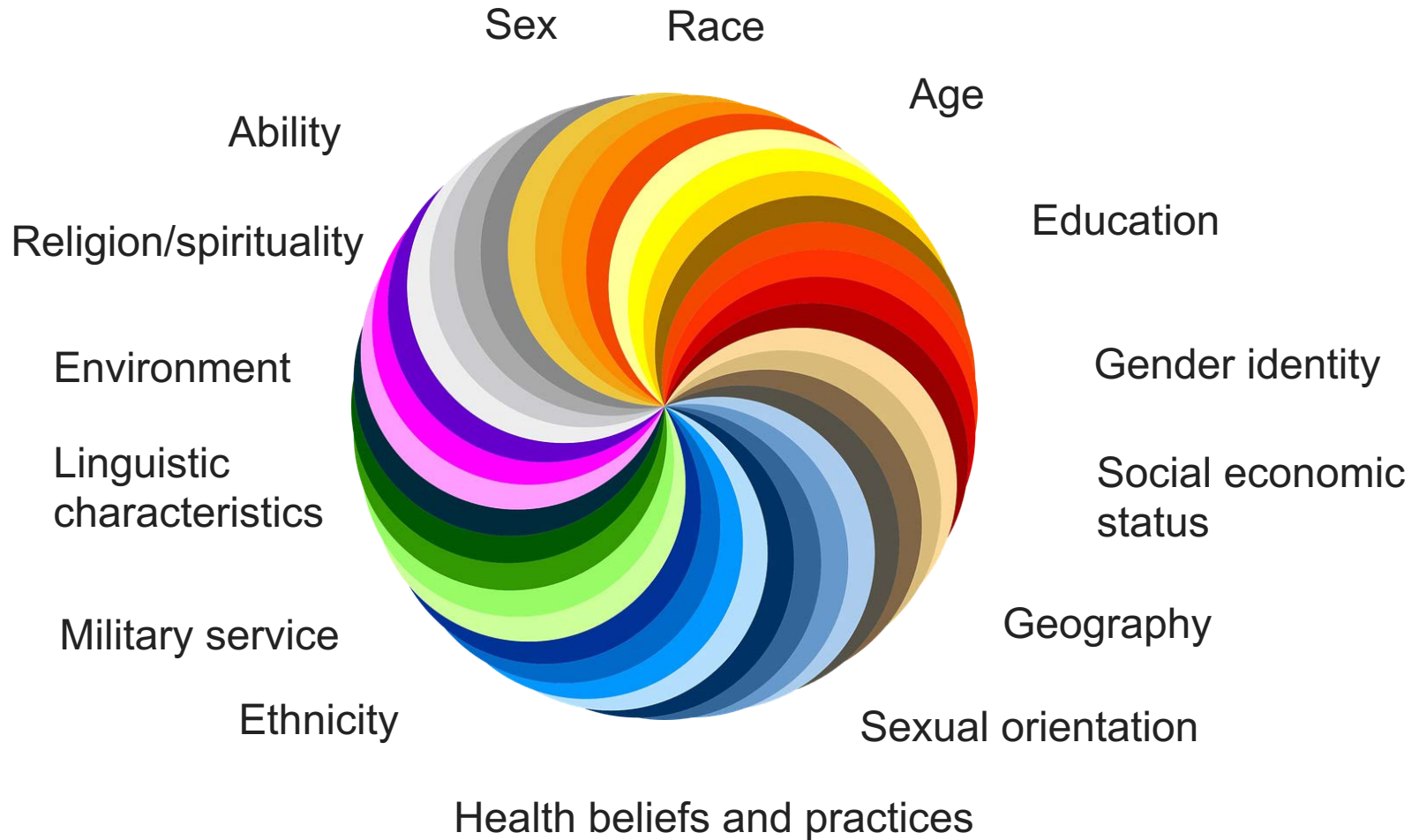
# Empathy



# The Value of Peer Support

- Establishing a genuine connection with another person
- Experiencing genuine compassion, integrity, and empathy when connecting with another person can inspire others to be more compassionate and empathic
- It fosters hope and personal growth
- It promotes health and wellness of the whole person
- It helps to build confidence in the person
- Accessing peer support may be someone's first step toward personal wellness/getting help
- It promotes social inclusion and sense of belonging
- It promotes the dignity and respect of all people in a non-judgemental environment

# Culture and Linguistics



# Four Cornerstones



# Four Cornerstones

SELF  
RESPONSIBILITY

SELF CARE

SELF  
AWARENESS

SUPPORT







# Exemplify

At the basis of the four Cornerstones, rests the belief that the Peer Supporter's commitment to embracing and applying the approach to Peer Support within themselves is key to becoming a Peer Supporter.

The best way for you, as a Peer Supporter, to support a Peer in moving through life challenges, living life well and realizing their wishes, is to **exemplify** the same within your own life.



# Cornerstone: Self Awareness

## Peer Supporters engage in self-discovery:

*Self awareness is a deep understanding of who you are;  
a sense of knowing yourself – including your history,  
your experiences, values, preferences, and limits.*

*Self awareness involves tuning into yourself,  
becoming acquainted with yourself,  
understanding yourself,  
forgiving yourself,  
loving yourself for who you are and who you want to be.*



# Cornerstone: Self Awareness

## Positive Thinking

What you say and how  
you say can make a  
difference

Story of little boy

You're not stuck at  
home, you're safe at  
home. One word can  
change your attitude,  
and one cough can  
change your life.

- Timber Hawkeye

# Challenging Times – Feelings

## **“CHALLENGING TIMES”**

So what are you aware of when it comes to this pandemic, what are some of the things, feelings, thoughts that we might be feeling each day.

(Please type in the chat box.)

# Challenging Times – Feelings

Time to Pause and Reset

Opportunity

Concern

Fear

Worry

ANXIETY

Depression

Scared

**“CHALLENGING TIMES”**

Confusion

Lack of Focus

Concern for Education

Who Cares!

APOCALYPSE

Losing it

Lonely

Trying to be positive

Uncertainty

Anger

LOSS OF INCOME



# Cornerstone: Self Responsibility

**Peer Supporters are accountable for themselves.**

*Self Responsibility is being accountable for one's self or taking charge of one's self.*

*Self responsibility includes self discipline and self management.*



# In Challenging Times

What things can you do  
that are your  
personal responsibility?

(Please enter things in the chat box)

# In Challenging Times

- Washing Hands
- Physically distancing
- Taking my medications
- Socially connecting
- Keeping informed
- Creating a list of things to do and checking it off when things get done
- Ordering groceries online
- Staying home if possible
- Food bank
- Having at least 30 minutes to yourself
- Connecting to family
- Challenging my thoughts
- Powering down
- Applying for government assistance
- Scheduling my time
- Finding a purpose for the day

# Cornerstone: Self Care

SELF CARE

*Self care involves a willingness to extend the same compassion to yourself as you do to others.*

*Self care includes a commitment to nurturing your physical, emotional, mental and spiritual being.*

*Self care involves a deep knowing of your priorities as well as your limits; a willingness to take actions that demonstrate your commitment to yourself*



# Self Care in Challenging Times

- B-R-E-A-T-H-E
- Grounding
- Powering down
- Meditation
- Mindfulness
- **Boundaries**
- Prayer
- Journaling
- Practice Gratitude
- Music
- Candles
- Exercise
- Routine
- Ask for virtual appointments
- Connecting with friends and family
- Eating well, limiting junk food
- Make things simple as we can
- Food prep one day for the week
- Connect with your spiritual, religious, humanist, cultural communities.
- Find strength and solace and power in traditions, writings, rituals, practices, holy time and seasons.
- Make art
- Sewing or crafting
- Funny movies

SELF LOVE IS ASKING  
YOURSELF WHAT YOU  
NEED - EVERYDAY - AND  
THEN MAKING SURE YOU  
RECEIVE IT.



# Self Care in Challenging Times

## Self-Care / Self-Nourishment Plan

**"Self Love is asking yourself what you need – everyday – and then making sure you receive it."**

**MIND**



**BODY**

Supportive people in  
my life:

**SPIRIT**

I want to accomplish:

# Self Care in Challenging Times

**BARB'S**

Self-Care / Self-Nourishment Plan

"Self Love is asking yourself what you need – everyday – and then making sure you receive it."



Supportive people in my life:

Melissa  
Fawn  
Julie  
Craig  
Allyson



I want to accomplish:

Downsizing  
Cleaning office  
Being Kind  
Good Work  
Peace  
Happiness

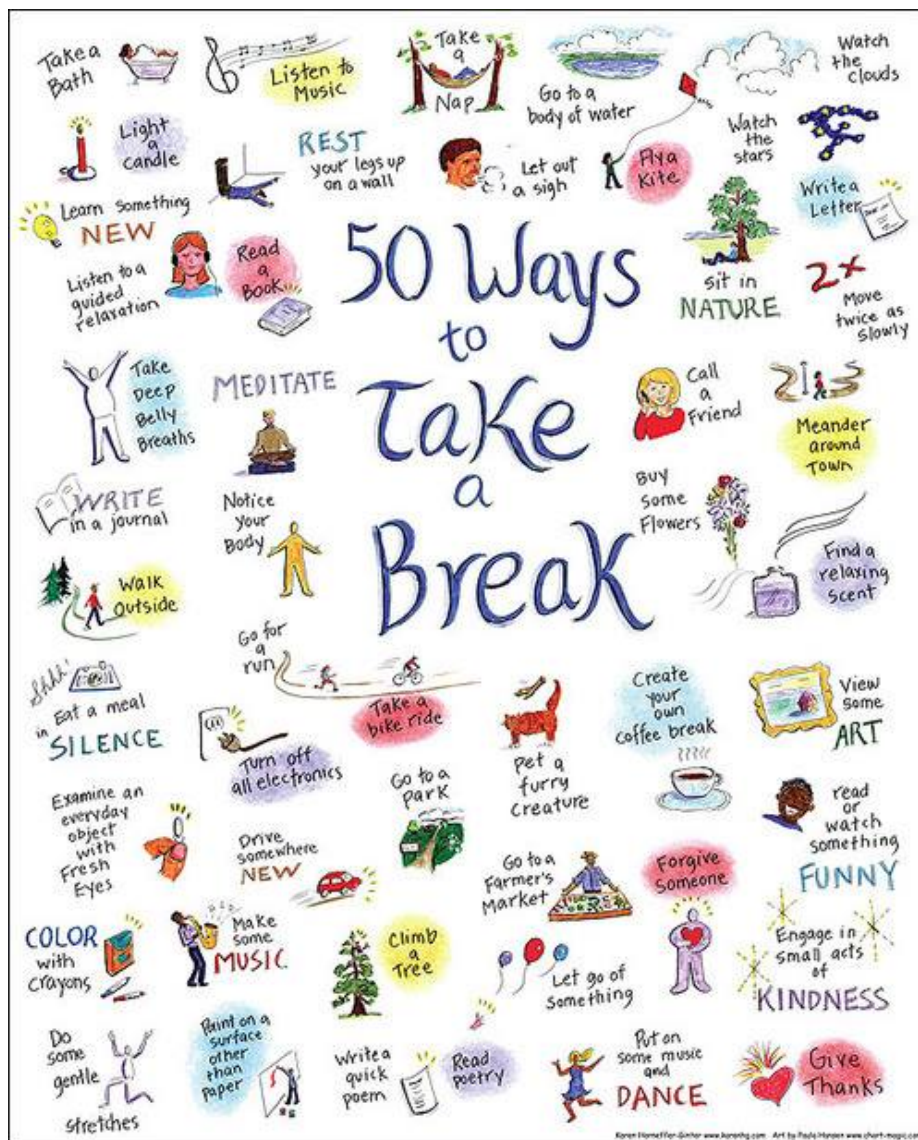
# Self Care in Challenging Times

## My Self-Care and Resilience Plan

My top 3 Self-Care Strategies or Resources	When will you do this? How? Who or What can support you?
1.	
2.	
3.	

**Make a commitment to yourself to practice your self-care routine as often as you can.**

# Self Care in Challenging Times





# Cornerstone: Support

**Peer supporters are as open to receiving support as they are invested in offering support.**

*Supports include people, places, activities and things.*

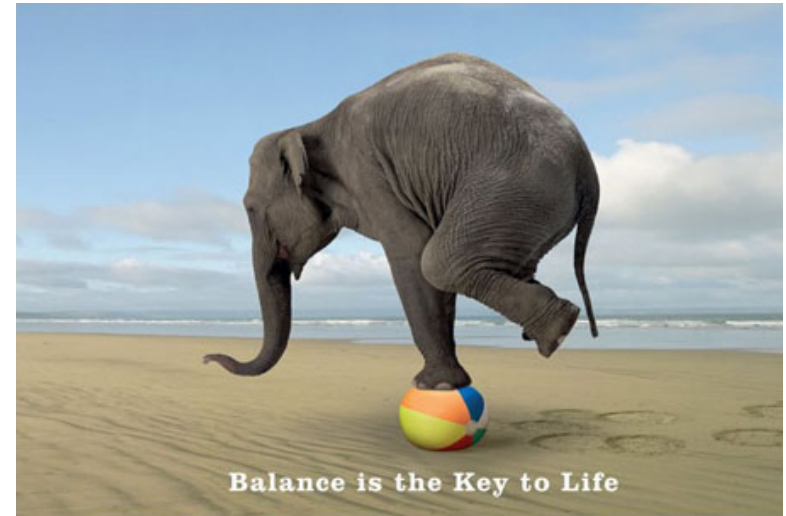
*Support is a key ingredient in life, personal journeys, and peer support.*

*The mutuality of peer support includes receiving as well as giving support.*



# Support in Challenging Times

- Dog
- Cat
- Other animals
- My friends
- My family
- Visioning a beach
- Movies
- Going on a drive
- Going for a walk in a park
- Cross-generational activities
- Taking food to others in safe manner
- Driving around to shut ins and singing to them
- Taking cyber walks with friends



# Benefits in Offering Peer Support

- “As no two issues are ever the same, the person providing the Peer Support is always learning and growing. ... You also have the satisfaction of seeing someone who seemed to be stuck move forward and attain success.”
- “Feeling useful...of giving back, learning about themselves. It’s a paradox, while helping others we can discover more about ourselves.”

# Benefits in Receiving Peer Support

- ‘Acceptance, someone to talk to, someone who challenges your thought patterns, someone who shows by example that there is .... **(HOPE)**.’
- “Empowerment, **hope**, and a sense that others have faced the same tribulations and overcome, through a sense of common ground and understanding.”
- “I have often heard from others that receiving peer support is very beneficial to them. Having someone accept you for you and believing in you and offering **hope** has changed peoples’ lives. I have seen and witnessed many individuals blossom with the appropriate support.”

# Sharing Hope



# What is Wellness?

From the World Health Organization:

“Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”

(<http://www.who.int/about/definition/en/print.html>)



# Seven Dimensions of Wellness

- 1. Physical
- 2. Emotional and Psychological
- 3. Social
- 4. Spiritual
- 5. Academic/Career
- 6. Environmental
- 7. Financial



Source: <https://www.uvic.ca/services/health/Parent/wellnesswheel/index.php>

# Core Connecting Skill: Listening



**Active Listening takes intention, energy, effort and practice, and includes the skills of:**

- Preparing to Listen
- Hearing the Words
- Hearing the Feeling
- Hearing the Message



# Peer Support is About...

- Fostering wellness for the whole person
- Genuinely and attentively listening to understand, not to reply
- Empowering peers to help themselves
- Respecting that a person is the expert in their own life
- Respect for each person's own path, choices and point of view
- Focusing on strengths and resources
- Validating emotions and challenging experiences
- Mutuality and equality
- Shared responsibility

# Peer Support Do's

- Do focus on listening not on fixing. It's okay not to have a solution.
- Validate hardship, but focus on efforts to cope and change. Share stories of recovery not suffering.
- Do be sensitive to emotions and boundaries that are expressed
- Do attend to verbal and non-verbal cues
- Do keep the focus of the conversation on the speaker and their experience
- Do accept your peer's value system when it is different than your own. Refer if necessary.
- Do use respectful language
- Ask for feedback ("Does that make sense?"). Clarify your statements if necessary.
- Learn to be okay with silence. You do not always need to fill it. Silence can be a powerful thing. Tuning in when someone needs silence is a skill.

# Peer Support Don'ts

- Don't make yourself the focus of the conversation with gratuitous self-disclosure
- Don't interrupt
- Don't ask too many questions
- Be careful not to criticize ***other people*** that your peer talks about
- Don't make promises you can't keep
- Don't commiserate and share horror stories.
- Don't paint yourself as an example of “normal” or how to do things the ‘right’ way. What works for you won't work for everyone else.
- Don't try to cheer someone up. You can't force someone's mood to change.



# Core Connecting Skill: Listening

**O**pen Questions

**A**ffirmation/Validation

**R**eflective Listening

**S**ummary Reflections



# Core Connecting Skill: Listening

## OARS: Open Questions

Open questions invite others to “tell their story” in their own words without leading them in a specific direction. Open questions should be used often in conversation but not exclusively. Of course, when asking open questions, you must be willing to listen to the person’s response.



# Core Connecting Skill: Listening

## **OARS: Affirmations / Validations**

Affirmations are statements and gestures that recognize peer strengths and acknowledge behaviors that lead in the direction of positive change, no matter how big or small. Affirmations build confidence in one's ability to change. To be effective, affirmations must be genuine and congruent.



# Core Connecting Skill: Listening

## **OARS: Reflective Listening**

Reflective listening is a primary skill in outreach. It is the pathway for engaging others in relationships, building trust, and fostering motivation to change.

Reflective listening appears easy, but it takes hard work and skill to do well. Sometimes the “skills” we use in working with peers do not exemplify reflective listening but instead serve as roadblocks to effective communication.

Examples are misinterpreting what is said or assuming what a person needs.

# Core Connecting Skill: Listening

## **OARS: Summaries**

Summaries are special applications of reflective listening. They can be used throughout a conversation but are particularly helpful at transition points, for example, after the person has spoken about a particular topic, has recounted a personal experience, or when the encounter is nearing an end.

Summarizing helps to ensure that there is clear communication between the speaker and listener. Also, it can provide a stepping stone towards change.



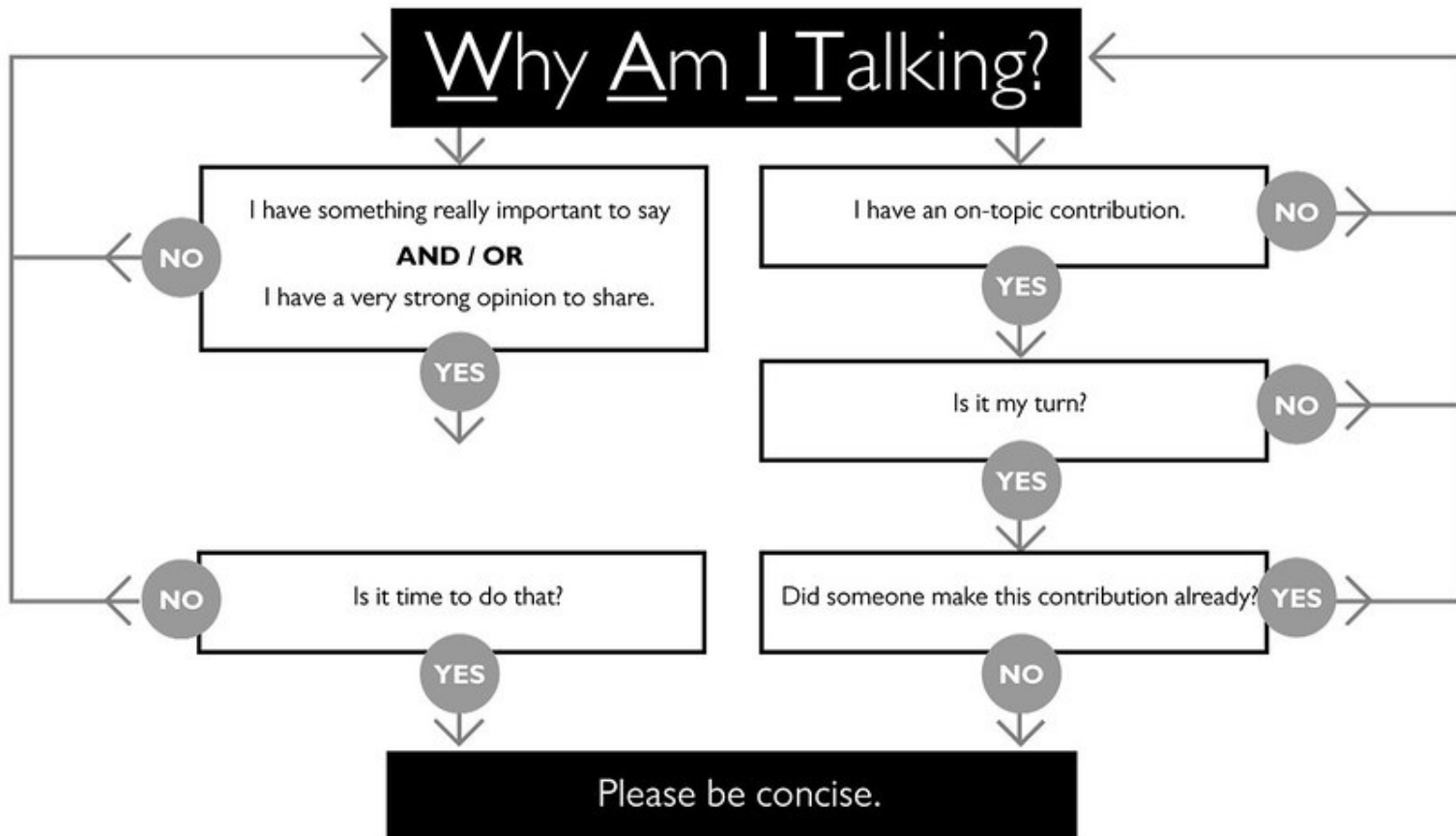
# Core Connecting Skill: Sharing



Spontaneous peer support is balanced:  
We give and we receive

# Core Connecting Skill: Sharing

## W.A.I.T.



# Core Connecting Skill: Sharing

## **Guidelines for effective sharing:**

- Seek permission from Peer prior to sharing.
- Ensure the benefit of sharing is clear.
- Keep your focus on the Peer as you share – to give the message “It’s all about you”.
- Share selective aspects and/or edited versions of your experience, perspective, story.
- Be in tune with impact of sharing on yourself as well as the Peer. i.e. if a person is feeling traumatized by what is going on, we don’t want to make it worse, by sharing more brutal details of things happening or that could happen.

# Peer Support No No's

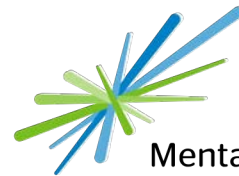


Fixing  
Advising  
Rescuing  
Counselling  
Diagnosing  
Analyzing  
Judging  
Persuading  
Criticizing  
Shaming  
Arguing  
Shoulding

# Tips on talking to someone in Crisis

When someone reaches out to you or you reach out to someone yourself, tell them you're there to listen and support **them** to find the next step.

**EXAMPLE:** "I'm here to listen and I really want to support you. I'm not a trained counsellor or a doctor, but I'll do my best to support you to get on the right path."



Mental Health  
Commission  
of Canada

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la santé mentale  
du Canada

# Tips on talking to someone in Crisis

**EXAMPLE:** “I just lost my job and I don’t know what to do. I have small kids and I don’t know if I’ll be able to get food on the table. I have no idea if I even qualify for EI.”

**Helpful answer:** “I’m hearing you say that you’re feeling very overwhelmed with all the uncertainty, and not knowing how to apply for EI is even more frustrating.”

**Unhelpful answer:** “I’m hearing you say that you’re worried about going hungry.”



# Tips on talking to someone in Crisis

**EXAMPLE:** “I’m worried about my son, who lives with a mental illness and doesn’t have secure housing, What if he catches this virus?”

**Helpful answer:** “I can tell that you care about your son very much. It can be hard not to run through the worst-case scenarios.”

**Unhelpful answer:** “Everyone feels stressed right now. I have two elderly parents, and they have trouble even using a cellphone.”

# Tips on talking to someone in Crisis

**EXAMPLE:** “I’m exhausted and I can’t fall asleep at night. I’m working full time, my kids are at home and my parents are elderly. I don’t know how long I can keep doing this.”

**Helpful answer:** “That does sound exhausting. I’m wondering what was most helpful for you in the past when you’ve been exhausted and overwhelmed?”

**Unhelpful answer:** “Why do you think you can’t sleep?”

**Unhelpful answer:** “When you can’t sleep, have you tried this cool meditation app?”

# Core Connecting Skill: Sharing

**I'VE LEARNED THAT  
PEOPLE WILL FORGET  
WHAT YOU SAID,  
PEOPLE WILL FORGET  
WHAT YOU DID, BUT  
PEOPLE WILL NEVER  
FORGET HOW YOU  
MADE THEM FEEL.**

**-Maya Angelou**





# Closing Thought

**Be well, Be calm, Be kind  
B-R-E-A-T-H-E**

**You are not alone  
We will get through this!**

**[opdi@opdi.org](mailto:opdi@opdi.org)**

